

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

- 512 slings of banana-fibre with a base of the heavy spathes of the
 [482] (areca-palm) and set off for the taro gardens, or they may tie round
 [226] their waists the little baskets which they use to catch fish in the
 rock-pools or to store the shell-fish they collect from the reef at
 low tide. Almost every day a small party goes off on a bartering
 [437] expedition, to meet the women from some other village with goods
 for exchange. The more energetic of the men will be flourishing
 bush-knives or fishing-rods; one may seize a spear and announce
 his intention of going to hunt wild pig, to the huge delight of all
 the dogs in the village, who signify their approval in the usual
 canine fashion, and there is no peace in the village till he has dis-
 appeared with them into the bush. A party may be told off to
 [497] work on the government road in order to keep it in sufficiently good
 condition to avoid a scolding from the A.D.O. on his next visit.
 512 Eventually, most people go off somewhere, either to work or to laze,
 461 unless there is a house being built or a canoe being finished,
 in which case some of the men will set to work on it, in rather
 desultory fashion. The boys wearing the *upi* depart in a gang on
 [383] some ploy of their own, the girls have either gone with their
 mothers or are left to look after the younger children, and usually
 one or two adults also remain in the village, having chosen not to
 work to-day. They do not like prolonged concentration on any-
 thing, and if I ask somebody, especially a young man, what he is
 going to do to-day, I shall very likely get the answer: 'Nothing, I
 worked yesterday.' There would seem really to be some justifica-
 tion for the universal complaint of the older men that the young
 men nowadays are lazy! The women do not bring back from the
 taro garden enough provender for more than a day or two at a time,
 [343] so they cannot take as many 'days off' as their menfolk do. The
 very few really industrious families have probably built themselves
 a shelter of banana leaves beside their taro patch, and will not
 come near the village for days together. Those who remain in the
 village spend a good part of the day in sleep. Women with small
 ● [853] babies, or minding those old enough to be left by their mothers,
 sit about on the back verandah or on prostrate logs, fondling the
 infants. For a time, in the early afternoon, the village is quiet.
 [482] In course of time the women come back with their baskets of
 shell-fish or their loads of taro or firewood, carried on their backs
 [312] as we carry a rucksack. The little girls go off to the water-pools in
 the bush and return with the family's water-supply—for all pur-
 poses—in a dozen or so cleaned-out coco-nut shells.

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856 bandages or a cradle-board, are employed to accentuate the effect.
[854] There are no cradles; if it is required to put the baby down it is laid on a woman's hood on the ground, but this is not often done, and I do not think it lies on its back sufficiently to cause any occipital flattening.

846 The child receives only the most superficial cleansing for the first five days. Then it is thoroughly washed in fresh water. It may then be taken outside the hut, but its mother is careful to keep it out of the sun. There is a tendency on the part of young mothers nowadays to shorten the period of seclusion in the hut, which they must share with the child, but the old women do not countenance this breach of rule if they can help it. If the child is *tsunaun*, i.e. [565] if its mother is a woman of rank, the period of seclusion must be extended to ten days.

LACTATION

• 853 In the absence of any animal whose milk can be utilized, the infant is entirely dependent upon its mother for this essential of its diet. In cases of the mother's inability to feed the infant or inability on the part of the infant to suckle, it usually dies. I did not hear of any cases in which the infant of a living woman was suckled by some one else, but instances are known to me where the sister of a woman who had died was feeding the dead woman's baby, having lost her own.

Babies are not passed round and suckled by different women at various times, as has been reported from other regions. While the child is small the mother keeps it with her constantly, taking it with her when she goes to the taro garden or to search for shell-fish on the reef. When it is a little older it may be left at home in charge of a small girl or another woman, but the mother will return to feed it. There is no attempt at regularity of feeding; it is generally offered the breast if it cries much. Some women have very pendulous breasts, but I have not seen any long enough to be thrown over the shoulder to a child carried on the back. I have often seen a woman bend down with her hands on her knees so that a child standing beside her could suck.

757 Women whose children die during the lactation period frequently suffer considerable pain from the retention of the milk.
824 In the cases which came under my personal observation, nothing was done to relieve this, but in my collection of 'prescriptions'

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there are two intended for this purpose. One is for use when the breasts are painful because the child has died:

Karavinoa (Acanthaceae).

Scrape the skin of the root and chew it with the betel-mixture. Spit the mash on to your hand and press it against the woman's breasts. Then scrape the skin off a branch of the same shrub and bury it under the bed on which the woman sleeps.

The other is used to mitigate pain in the breasts at the time of weaning:

*B5 (a species of bracken, *Pteris*).*

Rub the leaves between the hands, add lime, and massage the breasts.

There is no belief that suckling prevents conception, and this is definitely not the case. Lactation has nothing to do with the period of abstinence from sexual intercourse prescribed after child-birth. The child continues to take the breast long after this has been resumed. Basil Thompson says that with Fijian women, in spite of a prolonged period of suckling, 'menstruation often recommences at the 3rd or 4th month after parturition, and cohabitation, even at this early stage, often results in a second pregnancy' (1908, p. 177). So far as I am aware, the flux is not resumed so early in the women of Bougainville—at any rate some of the women I knew well, whose babies were a year or so old, told me that they had not yet begun to menstruate again since the birth. But the strict taboo enforcing abstinence from sexual intercourse for a period I estimate as at least two years after child-birth (see p. 156) ensures that a second pregnancy shall not follow very quickly.

Suckling is continued for four or five years—judging from the size and condition of some children who were still at the breast. But if another pregnancy occurs, the first child is weaned. A woman will never attempt to suckle both a baby and an elder child, as I have seen done by some American Indian women.

Weaning is, in the normal course of affairs, a gradual process, other food, beginning with taro, which is given from birth, being gradually increased in quantity and variety. The child, according to the statements of the women, makes, of its own account, fewer and fewer demands upon its mother, who accedes to them till they cease. There would seem, accordingly, to be no shock to

CHILDHOOD

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ing (Pl. 186). Before a child who is *tsunaun* can do this, a ceremony must be performed (this is described on pp. 189-93), but nothing of the sort is needed in the case of a commoner.

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The women do all sorts of hard work with their babies on their backs. I have seen them chopping wood with a child of apparently less than a year clinging pick-a-back fashion without being held. A mother who takes a very young child out on to the reef in the heat of the day, will generally keep its head carefully covered by her hood.

CHILDREN'S DIET

A child will be given taro, which has first been chewed to a pulp, on the very day of its birth. The quantity is soon increased. A woman will place a row of little heaps of this chewed pulp all along her thigh, as she sits on the ground, each of these forming a mouthful for the baby on her lap. Food thus prepared is called *mimi*, a word with which the baby soon becomes familiar, and one of the first he learns to say. Coco-nut, chewed in the same way, is added at an early age, but a child is not allowed to munch taro or coco-nut for itself until it can run about.

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Until the child is about a year old he must not eat bananas, lest he should be afflicted with a disease of the chest called *bira*. A child that has yaws must not be given pig or fish, and must not take its food in any house except that of its parents. It must on no account eat in the presence of a woman who is pregnant, and it must not be given taro from a house in which a man and a woman have recently indulged in sexual intercourse. Since yaws is very contagious, some of these prohibitions have a practical bearing, but in the minds of the natives the harm that would follow the breaking of them is supposed to fall upon the child and not on the persons it must avoid.

[753]

Babies of a few months old are given the husks of areca-nuts to suck. Children of five or six chew the nut itself freely, and also smoke both cigarettes and pipes.

[276]

As soon as the household gets going in the morning, the children are given lumps of taro cooked the night before; these they usually eat cold. They chew coco-nuts at all times of the day, and drink the contents of the green nut when they are thirsty. They share the main meal of the day, usually taken at sundown, with the other members of the family.

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276 a still younger child who also chewed it. The practice is usually referred to as 'betel-nut chewing', but, as has been pointed out by Ivens (1927, p. 285), this is actually a transference of the name of the condiment chewed with the nut to the nut itself, which is the seed of the areca-palm (*Areca catechu* and allied species). As usual throughout the Melanesian area, the areca-nut (*bok*) is always used in conjunction with betel-pepper (*ta-nek*) and lime (*iav*), a combination referred to by Rivers in *Melanesian Society* as 'the betel-mixture', a practice which I have followed in this book. The procedure is somewhat different from that described by Ivens for the SE. Solomons. It is frequently eaten after a meal, but also at any and every opportunity as desired, much as we smoke cigarettes. The catkin-like fruit, described by Guppy (p. 95) as 'the female spike', of the betel-pepper (*ta-sian*) is much more highly relished than the leaf, which is eaten only when the fruit is scarce, or by those to whom the fruit is taboo, as in the case of a mother with a suckling child. The lime is carried in a specially cleaned-out shell of a young coco-nut (also called *iav*), which is often ornamented with an elaborate incised pattern (*iav a gōm*) emphasized by having lime rubbed over the lines (Pl. 72). The north coast people do not now make these carved specimens, but obtain them by barter from the mountain people. Often, however, they are 'too lazy' to make even a plain one by cleaning a coco-nut, and are content to keep their lime in empty cigarette tins or tobacco tins. No spatula is used, the nut being dipped straight into the lime-pot. I saw no mortars for use by old people, who, if they cannot open the nuts with their hardened gums, will get one of the youngsters to do it for them.

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222 Areca-palms (*boi*) are cultivated, and are regarded as valuable property. There is also a kind of wild palm producing small nuts, which are also eaten, but only if the others are not available.

The betel-pepper (*Piper betel*) is cultivated. There are also wild varieties, of which I know three kinds; they have much smaller leaves and are less in favour. One, called *tut/sun*, is chewed especially by old women. All these varieties are parasitic on large trees. If a large quantity is required the stem will be severed near the ground and the whole plant pulled off the tree, but as a rule the fruit and leaves are carefully picked one by one so as not to injure the growing plant.

000 Lime is made from coral, branched coral being preferred. Its

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935

ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

PLATE 71



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CICATRIZATION BADLY HEALED

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[Facing p.432]